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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ECON KPAO PREL IT MO LE QA

SUBJECT: G8-BMENA INITIATIVE SECOND COORDINATION MEETING  
IN RABAT

REF: STATE 004781

¶1. Summary: Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Madelyn Spirnak attended a G8-Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) coordination meeting hosted by Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary General Youssef Amrani in Rabat on April 2, 2009. Italy's Deputy Director General for the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Countries for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Efisio Luigi Marras, and representatives from the non-governmental partners No Peace without Justice (NPWJ) and the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (OMDH) also attended. The purpose of the meeting was to coordinate policy priorities, the agenda, and organization for the 2009 Forum for the Future. Although a date for the Forum was not set, it is likely to occur in late October or early November 2009 in Morocco. SG Amrani asked for the Secretary's attendance to invigorate regional commitment to BMENA. End summary.

¶2. Morocco is committed to hosting a successful Forum for the Future and recognizes the importance this year's ministerial will have on the future of the BMENA Initiative. Along with Italy, the Moroccans have introduced a new construct by way of thematic workshops that reinstates the core elements of the initiative and further promotes the partnership between governments and civil society. In a separate bilateral meeting with A/DAS Spirnak and the Charge d'Affaires, Secretary General Amrani stressed the importance of the Secretary attending the Forum for the Future, noting renewed G8 commitment is needed to motivate the region's interest and involvement in BMENA. He also confirmed Morocco's intent to host the BMENA Gender Institute announced at the 2008 Forum for the Future in Abu Dhabi.

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READ-OUT OF COORDINATION MEETING  
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¶3. SG Amrani set the context for the coordination meeting by acknowledging the achievements of the BMENA Initiative over

the past five years: enlarging democracy and expanding human rights, creating a positive dialogue with civil society, and establishing of the Foundation for the Future; yet he noted that the initiative has lost some of its original enthusiasm.

He emphasized the need to develop worthwhile ideas to mobilize the region in order to renew the dynamism and build on the successes so that the partnership can grow. He stated that this year's Forum for the Future should mark a turning point for the BMENA Initiative. Italy's Deputy DG Marras welcomed Morocco's commitment to a successful Forum and agreed on the need to strengthen the partnership. NEA A/DAS Spirnak applauded the role the BMENA Initiative plays in strengthening civil society, noting that the challenges we face are too big for governments alone to resolve.

¶4. This year's civil society partners, OMDH and NPWJ, presented an overview of the BMENA Civil Society Planning meeting that took place in Amman, Jordan, January 28-29, 2009. At this meeting, civil society leaders agreed to the proposed thematic workshops focusing on political reform, economic reform, and human development, and offered suggestions for the three themes. BMENA civil society also felt strongly that the Parallel Forum should continue as a mechanism for non-governmental entities to discuss reform in the BMENA region. Deputy DG Marras commented on the success of the Amman meeting, noting it brought government and civil society closer together in this partnership. Likewise, SG Amrani indicated that governments and civil society are more or less on the same page. He also encouraged wider participation of civil society organizations in the process, particularly given the substance of the workshops, to bring new ideas to the discussions. A/DAS Spirnak concurred and proposed expanding the dialogue to include opportunities for youth, that this could be a possible cross-cutting theme bringing coherence to this year's activities. She also pointed out the value of having a Parallel Forum since not all civil society organizations will participate in each of the workshops. Others suggested focusing on both youth and women.

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2009 G8-BMENA INITIATIVE CALENDAR

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¶5. Thematic Workshops:

a. Political Reform: The first workshop will take place in Morocco June 26-27, 2009, and will, according to SG Amrani, focus on local governance. OMDH is the lead civil society organization and will prepare a concept paper one month in advance outlining priorities and modalities.

b. Economic Reform: The second workshop will take place in Lebanon during the third week of July, 2009 (exact date to be determined). This workshop will take into account current activities related to the global financial crisis while examining areas to encourage economic development. The host civil society organization will be confirmed following the Lebanese parliamentary elections. The concept paper for this workshop should be available in June.

c. Human Development: The final workshop will be held in Qatar the end of September or first week of October, 2009, (exact date to be determined) and address issues related to human security, such as women's empowerment, pluralism and diversity, and citizenship education. The Arab Democracy Foundation will be the lead civil society organization for the workshop. The concept paper will likely be available in September.

¶6. Sub-ministerial: Italy will host a sub-ministerial in Rome in the fall, approximately 20 days ahead of the Forum for the Future. This will enable senior officials to deliberate the outcomes of the workshops and reach preliminary agreement on recommendations to go forward to the Forum.

¶7. Forum for the Future: The Forum for the Future will

likely take place during the last week of October or the first week of November in either Rabat or Marrakesh, Morocco.

¶8. There is no preparatory meeting planned at this time. Instead, Italy and Morocco have agreed to hold a DVC with key countries sometime in May.

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